



## Delaware Housing Coalition

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[www.housingforall.org](http://www.housingforall.org)

January 8, 2007

The Honorable Christopher A. Coons, County Executive  
New Castle County  
87 Reads Way  
New Castle, Delaware 19720

Dear County Executive Coons:

The Delaware Housing Coalition commends New Castle County on its thorough process in formulating the excellent draft document, *The New Castle County Comprehensive Development Plan*. We recognize that many complicated and competing challenges are being addressed through this effort.

Delaware Housing Coalition is the statewide non profit organization which advocates for safe, decent, and affordable housing throughout the state. We are pleased to be able to offer the following comments.

### Need

The most recent (December 2006) *Out of Reach* annual report researched and published by the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows the following challenges for extremely low to moderate income renters in New Castle County:

1. Rent for a two bedroom fair market rate (FMR) apartment in New Castle County is \$923/month
2. This is a 33 percent increase in rent for a two bedroom FMR apartment from 2000
3. The two bedroom housing wage (the wage a household must earn to not pay more than the generally accepted 30 percent of income on shelter) in New Castle County is \$17.75 hour.
4. At the 2007 Delaware minimum wage of \$6.65/hour\*, it would take 106 hours/week to be able to afford this two-bedroom apartment

### Strategies for Affordable Housing

DHC supports the components included in the strategies for affordable housing. We further urge New Castle County to address the following items:

5. Prioritize the neediest, the extremely low and very low income households
6. Strengthen the Inclusionary Zoning / Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program. This type program has worked very well across the country as a mandatory program such as Montgomery County, Maryland's long-standing successful program or with stronger developer incentives such as the 2006 ordinance passed by Sussex County;
7. Seek perpetual affordability in building, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable units wherever public money is invested. Models of community land trusts (CLT's) featuring perpetual affordability have been initiated in Delaware (Diamond State CLT and West Rehoboth CLT) based on extensive experience across the country;
8. Work to maximize efficiency through outreach, etc. of the Section 8 housing choice voucher program;
9. Transportation has been shown to be the second costliest item in a household's budget. We are pleased to see smart growth strategies on the table not only for the clear environmental and land use considerations but for the community's, especially low income household's ability to live in decent housing and have access to public transit as well.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We would be pleased to collaborate with you in future in implementing this new comprehensive plan.

Kind regards,

Ken Smith  
Executive Director

cc: County Council

\* The report published on December 12, 2006 did not take into account the new Delaware minimum wage, \$6.65. The Out of Reach 2006 reports that 115 hours of minimum wage [at \$6.15/hour] are needed to afford a two bedroom FMR apartment in New Castle, Delaware.

\*\* Center for Transit-Oriented Development and Center for Neighborhood Technology. The Brookings Institution Urban Markets Initiative, *The Affordability Index: New Tool for Measuring the True Affordability of a Housing Choice*, January 2006